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HERBERT SPENCER  
WILLIAM HENRY HUDSON



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PHILOSOPHIES ANCIENT AND MODERN

HERBERT SPENCER

## NOTE

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# HERBERT SPENCER

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By  
WILLIAM HENRY HUDSON

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## PREFACE

THE aim of this little book is almost entirely expository. I have tried in it to give a simple outline of the cardinal ideas and more important bearings of the *Synthetic Philosophy*. The accomplishment of this task within the limits allowed me has made more than sufficient demands upon my powers of presentment and condensation. Absence of recorded disapproval must, therefore, not be regarded as necessarily implying assent. Where I have departed from interpretation to express judgment, I have done so simply for the purpose of indicating certain points at which, in respect of fundamental matters, Spencer's account of things seems to me to be most seriously open to criticism.

WILLIAM HENRY HUDSON.



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# HERBERT SPENCER

## CHAPTER I

### HIS LIFE AND CHARACTER

HERBERT SPENCER was born at Derby on 27th April 1820. His father, a teacher, was a man of pronounced individuality, independent in thought and action, rigidly conscientious, but somewhat captious and austere. His mother was a woman of only average intelligence, in whom, in marked contrast with the Spencer stock, 'altruism was too little qualified by egoism.' Spencer believed that such of his 'specialities of character and faculty' as were 'due to inheritance' were derived from his father. Certainly his father's influence was the most important factor in his early life. It was largely owing to his mother's subordination in the household that the home-atmosphere, while unusually clear and bracing, was rather chilly

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and dry. The conditions of his childhood tended to foster self-reliance, originality, critical power. They did little to develop the emotional side of his nature.

The elder Spencer was strongly opposed to the educational methods then in vogue, and though the boy was sent for a time to a day-school, he knew little of mental pressure or the discipline of a regular routine. Judged by ordinary standards, his early progress was therefore extremely unsatisfactory. But, meanwhile, he gained in many respects from the 'miscellaneous intellectual training' which he received at home. He was 'a frequent listener' to discussions among his father's friends on politics, religion, and ethics. His taste for science and natural history was encouraged. His father's principle being 'that of self-help carried out in all directions,' the boy was continually challenged to explain things by the question—'Can you tell me the cause of this?' This, he considered, did much to establish in him 'a habit of seeking for causes, as well as a tacit belief in the universality of causation.'

At the age of thirteen, he was placed in charge of an uncle, the Rev. Thomas Spencer, perpetual curate of Hinton Charterhouse, near Bath, a radical clergyman, well known for his activity in

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social reform, and characterised, like all the Spencers, by vigour of intellect and strongly-marked individuality. At Hinton, where he remained three years, his education was taken more systematically in hand, though unfortunately history and general literature had no place in his course. In some ways he profited little. Hating the study of languages, mainly because it involves the rote-learning of words and arbitrary rules, he made slight progress with Greek, Latin, and French. But, on the other hand, physics and mathematics greatly attracted him, and helped the development of his reasoning powers. One incident of this period is worth recording even in the briefest sketch. While reading with his uncle Dr. Arnott's treatise on Physics, he boldly dissented from the doctrine of inertia as there set forth; and when his uncle supported Arnott's view, he remained unshaken in his opposition. He notes this as an early illustration of his 'constitutional disregard for authority.' It reveals, moreover, the growth of various other salient features of his mind and character, especially his independence of thought, his immense self-confidence, and his indomitable will. 'Anything like passive receptivity,' he elsewhere remarks, was always 'foreign to my nature.' Neither then, nor at any



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other time, did he pay the smallest respect to dogma or tradition. A chief ground of his quarrel with ordinary methods of education was that 'they encourage submissive receptivity instead of independent activity.'

Thomas Spencer for a time entertained the hope that his nephew would go to Cambridge. This was, however, relinquished; and on leaving Hinton, Herbert returned home. After a short experiment in teaching, for which (unlike another great educational theorist, Rousseau) he seems to have possessed conspicuous qualifications, he turned his attention, in 1837, to railway engineering as a profession in which he had every chance of success. Yet when, after ten years, a combination of reasons led him to abandon it, he did so apparently without much regret. At twenty-eight, he had to start life afresh. These ten years had, however, counted greatly in his intellectual development. At twenty, while engaged on the Birmingham and Gloucester Railway, he became much interested in geology. As a result, he bought Lyell's recently-published *Principles of Geology*. One chapter in that work 'was devoted to a refutation of Lamarck's views concerning the origin of species.' He rose from its perusal with a 'decided leaning' towards such

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views. That Lyell's arguments thus produced 'the opposite effect to that intended' was, he afterwards believed, chiefly due to the harmony of the development hypothesis (as the evolution theory was then called) with the whole movement of his mind towards a purely naturalistic interpretation of things. Ridiculed as he was for entertaining ideas then so much at variance with current scientific opinion, his belief in evolution never afterwards wavered. Two years later he opened his career as an author by the publication in the *Nonconformist* of a series of twelve letters, presently revised and reissued in pamphlet form, on *The Proper Sphere of Government*. This little work is remarkable for the clearness with which it enunciates that uncompromising individualism which was to be the key-note of his later political writings. The influence of the development hypothesis upon the young thinker's mind is shown in his contention that the phenomena of social life, no less than those of organic nature, conform to law, and that social progress depends upon the gradual adaptation of constitution to conditions. The practical inference drawn is, that such progress is a process of natural self-adjustment, which is not helped but hindered by State interference, and that the true and only

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function of government is to maintain such 'equitable relations among citizens' as will allow this process to go on unimpeded—'in a word, to administer justice.'

Engineering having failed him, Spencer looked next to journalism, and there he was fortunate enough to find, almost immediately, an open door. In December 1848 he became sub-editor of *The Economist*, a position which he held till 1853, and then resigned, that he might devote himself entirely to independent literary work. The step was prompted by the feeling that he had now discovered his true field. In 1850 he had published his first important book, *Social Statics*. In this, the naturalistic theories of society and the extreme individualism of the *Letters on Government* are more fully developed, and the evolutionary conception of progress as a transition from the uniform to the multiform is clearly implied. It was followed, in the course of the next few years, by various essays, in which it is now both easy and interesting to trace the movement of his thought along many lines towards the doctrines which form the foundation of his philosophic system; and by a large volume on the *Principles of Psychology* (1855), in which the phenomena of mind are interpreted from the

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evolutionary point of view. A further stage in the expansion and consolidation of his ideas is marked by the essay on *Progress: Its Law and Cause* (1857), in which the conception of evolution as universal is elaborated and illustrated in detail. The next year, while writing a long defence of the nebular hypothesis, he became possessed of the idea that the doctrine of evolution might be made the basis of a systematic interpretation of life, mind, and society. This was the origin of the *Synthetic Philosophy*. The prospectus of the proposed series of volumes was drawn up in January 1858, revised in 1859, and issued in March 1860.

Spencer thus set his hand to a task which he then calculated would absorb all his energies for twenty years. Under the most favourable conditions the undertaking would have been a gigantic one. Spencer's circumstances at the time were the reverse of favourable. His financial outlook was disquieting. A nervous breakdown which had followed the strain of writing the *Psychology* had left him a martyr to sleeplessness and dyspepsia, and with sadly curtailed powers of work. He himself afterwards realised to the full the wildly extravagant character of his project, which 'to any unconcerned bystander' might well have

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appeared 'almost insane.' 'To think that an amount of mental exertion great enough to tax the energies of one in full health and vigour, and at ease in respect of means, should be undertaken by one who, having only precarious resources, had become so far a nervous invalid that he could not with any certainty count upon his powers from one twenty-four hours to another!' Yet with rare and admirable courage and tenacity he persevered against all the difficulties thrown in his way by financial embarrassments, the meagreness of public support, adverse criticism, and ever-increasing ill-health; and ultimately, after, not twenty, but thirty-six years of toil, he was able to write 'finis' to his immense life-work. As a monument of patient labour, self-sacrifice, and superb devotion to a great purpose, the *Synthetic Philosophy* must always hold a high place in the history of thought.

Spencer was just forty when he began *First Principles*. From this point on, the main interest of his biography must be sought in the progress of his work. For some twenty years the stress of labour and the monotony of existence were relieved by frequent holidays, undertaken sometimes for simple relaxation, more often in search of health. Of these the most important were a

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tour in Italy in 1868, an excursion up the Nile in 1879, and a visit to America in 1882. But, meanwhile, the troubles arising from a disordered nervous system had been steadily growing upon him; and after his return from the United States, his fast-waning strength compelled him more and more to husband his powers by resolutely shutting himself off from all outer distractions. This brought about his gradual withdrawal from the interests of the social world. At length he became almost a recluse, hardly accessible to his closest friends, and to others not accessible at all. He had never married. He had no home ties. To avoid the evils of solitude, he lived for many years in boarding-houses in London. This substitute for domestic life presently grew intolerable. He thereupon tried various experiments in making a home of his own; and finally took a house on the East Cliff at Brighton. There he lapsed rapidly into absolute invalidism. The completion of the *Synthetic Philosophy* brought him little pleasure beyond what was afforded by the simple sense of emancipation from long-continued toil. But his task finished, the great purpose of his life achieved, existence was left blank of interest or desire. The years that remained were fraught with much weariness and

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depression. He died peacefully in the early morning of 8th December 1903. His body, in accordance with his directions, was cremated at Golder's Hill; and there his old friend, Mr. Leonard (now Lord) Courtney, delivered an impressive address.

The briefest analysis of Spencer's character shows that certain closely related mental and moral qualities stand out with striking distinctness.

That which perhaps first arrests attention is what he himself calls the 'ingrained nonconformity' of his nature. The 'chronic insubordination' of his boyhood continued throughout life. Authority had no meaning for him. He was wholly uninfluenced by the power of the past, by the weight of creed and social opinion, by the prestige of established doctrines and great names. To quote some one else's views in support of his own would have seemed to him almost the abnegation of his right to think for himself. Always an impatient reader, he went to books only for facts not otherwise obtainable, and cared nothing for the theories and conclusions of preceding thinkers. The only indebtedness he recognised to them was 'the indebtedness of antagonism.' 'All along,' he once wrote to Leslie



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Stephen, 'I have looked at things through my own eyes, and not through the eyes of others.' Independent, self-confident, self-assertive, he was ready, like Athanasius, to stand against the world. That this 'constitutional disregard for authority' led him to extremes, he afterwards admitted. It caused him at times to 'underestimate the past.' It only too evidently bred such a habit of dissent that, as the *Autobiography* clearly shows, he found a positive pleasure in cultivating and proclaiming opposition to current ideas on anything and everything. It is thus impossible to acquit him of the charge of an occasional tendency to intellectual arrogance. Yet his independence and fearlessness have of course to be reckoned among the characteristics which enabled him to accomplish his own work as a pioneer in thought.

Even more obviously that work was made possible only by his extraordinary originality, his penetration and grasp, his rare capacity for both analysis and synthesis. He possessed in an astonishing degree the power of 'constructive imagination.' The immense fertility of his mind is illustrated in the way in which he threw out fresh and pregnant ideas on every subject he touched. Outside the field of philosophic specu-

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lation it was equally shown in the long list of his inventions, which includes all sorts of ingenious devices and contrivances from a scheme for aerial locomotion on the one hand to a new fork for toasting bacon on the other.

A third outstanding characteristic was his 'abnormal tendency to criticism.' Much as he regretted this, he seems never to have made any resolute effort to check it. He was, in fact, somewhat censorious; prone to fault-finding, and little given to praise. This 'incurable habit' led to many unfortunate results. In ordinary conversation it caused him continually to seek reasons for disagreement and disapproval. It made him appear, even when he was not really, unsympathetic. It gave a flavour of harshness to many of his judgments. It interfered seriously, as he acknowledges, with his appreciation of works of literature and art, and to some extent with his enjoyment of music, of which he was genuinely fond. He suspected that it had even been 'a chief factor in the continuance' of his 'celibate life.' He makes the distressing confession that 'readiness to see inferiorities rather than superiorities, must have impeded the finding of one who attracted me in adequate degree' for marriage.

The more important defects of Spencer's genius

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and character were the defects of his qualities. They arose almost entirely from the undue predominance of his intellectual faculties and the subordination of the emotional nature. In him the brain was always in the ascendant, while the feelings were perpetually restrained. Hence that lack of warmth and spontaneity which affected even his style; hence also the reserve and austerity of manner which unfavourably impressed those who came casually into contact with him. It is to be deplored that the whole course of his life, from childhood up, should have tended towards emotional repression, and that, in part because of his peculiar temperament, in part on account of the sacrifices entailed by his work, he should have shut himself off so completely from common human relationships and responsibilities. His real genius for friendship shows that he might have profited greatly by larger opportunities for the culture of the feelings. As it was, his emotional deficiencies adversely influenced in many ways his whole converse with life. He cared little for literature. Poetry made but slight appeal to him. In his views of art he was something of a Philistine. His repeated attacks upon history as commonly conceived and written, though up to a certain point fully justified,

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exhibit a want of interest in personalities which is unmistakably suggestive of his limitations. In opposing the unwisdom of much that is miscalled philanthropy, he must, even to those who most fully agree with him, often seem hard. His attitude towards the 'creed of Christendom,' which he curtly dismissed as 'alien to my nature, both emotional and intellectual,' proves conclusively that the spiritual claims of Christianity were never apprehended by him.

In private life other defects were often painfully apparent. He was too exacting in his demands upon others, and intolerant of their weaknesses and shortcomings. He was frequently impatient, irritable, sharp of tongue. But these peculiarities were largely due to ill-health—to sleeplessness, dyspepsia, and the morbid mental condition which was in part the cause and in part the effect of persistent hypochondria. It would be improper, therefore, to attach too much importance to them.

All deductions made, there was much of moral strength and greatness in Spencer's character which deserves our admiration. He was a genuine seeker after truth. He was a genuine apostle of righteousness. Wholly superior to all worldly ambitions, he pursued the path he had

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marked out for himself without regard for personal consequences. Wealth and fame had no attractions for him. Domineering as he often was, he was yet, unlike many of his religious antagonists, scrupulously fair in controversy. He showed a splendid zeal for great causes, and in upholding what he believed to be right, he never paused to consider the unpopularity which might result. He was the very incarnation of integrity. Upright, conscientious, transparently honest in word and deed, he governed his life, even in its minutest details, by the highest principles of rectitude and justice.

Spencer's work is very voluminous; but his miscellaneous writings may be regarded as, in the main, ancillary to the *System of Synthetic Philosophy*. This comprises ten volumes—*First Principles*, *The Principles of Biology*, *The Principles of Psychology*, *The Principles of Sociology*, and *The Principles of Ethics*. Our plan here will be to pass the contents of these volumes under brief review, reserving a few pages at the end for a consideration of Spencer's interpretation of religion.

## CHAPTER II

### ‘FIRST PRINCIPLES’

It is not the business of philosophy, as defined by Spencer, to undertake an interpretation of the universe different in kind from that which science gives. Philosophy builds with the materials furnished by science. Its sphere is, therefore, that of phenomena. It makes no attempt to transcend these, or to explore the problems of Absolute Being. Insistence on this limitation is not tantamount to a denial of a Reality, of which phenomena are merely manifestations. On the contrary, consciousness of such Reality is involved in all our thinking. But it is a consciousness of which ‘no logical account can be given.’ Recognising the Absolute not only as unknown but also, owing to the constitution of our intelligence, as everlastingly unknowable, philosophy proceeds to its own task of reporting upon phenomena. Something will be said later of Spencer’s Doctrine

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of the Unknowable in its religious aspects. Here it should be noted that he elaborated it in the forefront of his positive undertaking for the purpose only of defining the scope and object of his philosophy. It was no part of his plan to employ agnosticism as a basis for his interpretation of the knowable. That interpretation must therefore be regarded as independent of his metaphysical prolegomena and judged apart from any ontological considerations.

While, however, the field of philosophy is conterminatè with that of science, it aims within that field at results beyond those which science sets out to achieve. Each science seeks the widest generalisations possible within its own limits. By such generalisations its special phenomena are summed up, correlated, unified. But, these widest generalisations reached, the bounds of each separate science are reached also. Here the work of philosophy begins. It carries the process of generalisation and unification a stage further. It seeks such most general statements as shall ‘comprehend and consolidate the widest generalisations of science.’ Its purpose is to find those universal truths under which all the truths of the sciences may be subsumed; to formulate the ultimate laws of which the highest laws of the



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sciences are merely corollaries. Philosophy, therefore, is the complete unification of knowledge—knowledge reduced to a coherent whole.

However rigorously inductive its method, such philosophy must assume something to begin with. Assumptions made provisionally will afterwards be justified if the conclusions deducible from them are shown to correspond with the facts given by experience. But as this statement itself postulates the existence of likenesses and differences among phenomena and the competence of consciousness as judge of these, one datum is already reached. The next step must be the discovery of some ultimate antithesis to which all other likenesses and differences are referable. This is found in our 'deepest cognition,' the distinction between self and not-self, or subject and object. But this is not all. In considering the conditions under which the Unknowable Power is manifested, we are brought directly to the conceptions of space, time, matter, and motion. The reality of these 'most general forms' of thought is taken for granted alike by common sense and by science. But these 'necessary data of consciousness' are shown by psychological analysis to be susceptible of decomposition. Space, time, matter, motion, are all translatable

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into terms of force, which itself remains untranslatable into any other terms. To force, then, we come at last as the ‘ultimate of ultimates. But since it is impossible to conceive force, throughout all its transformations, as arising out of nothing or lapsing into nothing—since constancy in its quantity is a presupposition and condition of all science—it follows that ‘the force or energy manifested, now in one way now in another, persists or remains unchanged in amount.’ In the Persistence of Force (which is Spencer’s phrase for Conservation of Energy), we therefore reach the ultimate universal truth which at once forms the basis of all science, and, as underlying all other truths, itself transcends demonstration. If we ask what this force is, there is no answer which carries us beyond the phenomenal effects wrought by it. We know it in and through its manifestations. Of its nature we know nothing. ‘By the Persistence of Force, we really mean the persistence of some cause which transcends our knowledge and conception.’

That completely unified account of things which we ask from philosophy will therefore take the shape of an account of the transformations of force under the modes of matter and motion. Such an account becomes possible on recognition

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of certain universal truths which are deducible from our datum. That matter is indestructible and motion continuous, is clearly implied in it. But since force persists, the force which produces a given change cannot be lost in producing that change; it must simply undergo metamorphosis into an equivalent amount of some other force or forces. Hence the connection between the manifestation of force which we call cause and that which we call effect is an invariable connection. 'Our belief in the necessity and universality of causation is the belief that every manifestation of force must be preceded and succeeded by some equivalent manifestation.' The doctrines of the Transformation and Equivalence of Forces and the Uniformity of Law are thus restated as deductions from the ultimate datum of consciousness. Two other corollaries have to be added. Co-existent forces of attraction and repulsion being everywhere at work, motion follows the line of least resistance or of greatest traction or of the resultant of the two. Where there is a conflict of forces not in equilibrium, since the force manifested in motion in a given direction cannot be annihilated, if it disappears as action it reappears as reaction. Hence, within limits, the direction of motion is continually being reversed. The law

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of the Rhythm of Motion—universally illustrated by all classes of phenomena—is thus affiliated upon the Persistence of Force. Rhythm is not simply, as shown by the facts, a characteristic of all motion. It is a necessary characteristic of all motion.

We have here, then, a number of truths having that universality which philosophy demands, since they are truths which, holding good in all the special sciences and thus transcending their class-limits, may be used to ‘unify concrete phenomena belonging to all divisions of Nature.’ But we have as yet advanced no further than the materials for our philosophy. We have learned what are the factors of all phenomena. We have now to investigate the co-operation of these factors in the production of the universe and all its parts. Each science, reaching its own special synthesis of factors, undertakes to show how its phenomena in all their complexity arise from the combined action of these factors. Philosophy must seek ‘a universal synthesis’ in which all these special syntheses may be gathered up. What is required, then, is the formulation of a law which will cover the entire history of phenomena as known to us, by expressing ‘the combined consequences’ of the forces which have

been separately formulated. The universe, in general and in all its parts, exhibits itself in perpetual change. Every change manifestly involves change in matter and motion. The law we seek, therefore, must be the law of all transformation given in terms of matter and motion. With this law to interpret all change, philosophy will become synthetic; it will provide a systematised genetic history of the cosmos, an 'account of the Transformation of Things,' and 'of the ultimate uniformities they present,' under a formula which embraces them all. This law of the perpetual redistribution of matter and motion going on throughout the universe is the law of evolution and dissolution.

Necessarily, that it may cover all changes, from those of the sidereal system to those of everyday social life, this law has to be stated in the most abstract phraseology. Spencer's full formula of evolution stands thus: 'Evolution is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation.' While the more abstruse terms of this formula cannot now be discussed, the gist of it

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may be stated in somewhat simpler language. That redistribution of matter and motion which results in the formation of an aggregate constitutes evolution. Evolution, therefore, is integration, or an increase of definiteness and coherence; as the opposite process, dissolution, is disintegration, or a lapse into indefiniteness and incoherence. But this is the primary aspect only of the evolutionary process. It is commonly accompanied by a parallel movement in the direction of increasing heterogeneity or diversity. The increasing unity of structure which characterises an evolving aggregate is that unity in complexity which is gained when a number of unlike specialised parts are brought into organic interdependence. Evolution in structure, whether it be in the growth of a seed into a tree, of an ovum into an animal, or of a primitive into an advanced society, always means a change from uniformity or homogeneity to multiplicity or heterogeneity. The unevolved is the simple. The evolved is the complex. But such increase in complexity constitutes evolution only on condition that the primary process of integration is meanwhile maintained. Advance in complexity, if not accompanied by corresponding advance in organic unity, manifestly tends to the breaking up of an aggregate, and is therefore



in the line not of evolution but of dissolution. In evolution, the parts of a developing aggregate, while they become differentiated from one another and specialised in function, work together for the life of the whole.

We have thus a formula which, in the most highly generalised statement, covers all phases of that 'continuous transformation which the universe undergoes.' Or, more strictly speaking, we have the formula of all changes in the ascending scale of life. To make our statement complete, we have to remember that the ascending scale implies a descending scale. Since all motion is rhythmical, the forces which make for integration are perpetually in conflict, locally and generally, with the forces which make for disintegration. Evolution and Dissolution together constitute the entire cycle of change. Through this cycle all things pass. To what we metaphorically call the 'law' of evolution and decay, all things conform. The same law of transformation holds good throughout the cosmos. A universal principle is thus given in terms of which a systematised account of things may be attempted.

But before we apply our formula in those various departments into which for convenience



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we divide a universe which is one and whole, another step has to be taken. The formula of evolution is only empirical. It expresses merely the widest generalisation in which all other generalisations merge. Philosophy seeks not only a systematic account of the transformations of things, but also the rationale of such transformations. It must do more than show that evolution is universal. It must provide not only the history of the facts, but also their causal nexus. It must show why evolution is universal, and why the changes must have taken place in the way described, and could have taken place in no other way. The formula of evolution must, therefore, be restated deductively.

This is done by reference to three universal laws. First, the condition of homogeneity (or of relative homogeneity, for of absolute homogeneity we know nothing) is a condition of instability; as the different parts of any finite mass are unequally exposed to incident forces, differentiation must result; the relatively homogeneous becomes heterogeneous; the heterogeneous continually becomes more and more heterogeneous. Secondly, every cause necessarily produces more than one effect. Thirdly, unlike units in any aggregate tend to separate while like units tend to cluster

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together, and thus differentiations are made sharper and more definite. These three laws—the Instability of the Homogeneous, the Multiplication of Effects, and Segregation—together explain the necessity of those evolutionary processes described in the formula. These three laws being exhibited as deductions from the Persistence of Force, the formula of evolution is presented under a rational character.

The foundations of philosophy as completely unified knowledge are thus laid. To the establishment of these universal truths Spencer's introductory volume, *First Principles*, is devoted. In the nine volumes which follow, these universal truths are carried forward as an organon into the special phenomena which form the subject-matter of biology, psychology, sociology, and ethics.

A word of warning is here desirable. For the purposes of his philosophy Spencer kept close to a mechanical phraseology. He sought to give a genetic history of the universe in terms of matter, motion, and force. This might seem to imply that his system is patently materialistic. To regard it as such, would, however, be to take it in a sense which he himself repudiated. When we speak of matter, motion, and force, we are only endeavouring to reduce our complex symbols of

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thought to the simplest symbols. But we are still dealing with symbols. ‘The problem of existence is not solved; it is simply moved further back.’ Matter, motion, force, are themselves involved in the ultimate mystery of things. They are concepts with which we have to work. But they are only signs of the Unknowable Reality underlying them all.

## CHAPTER III

### ‘THE PRINCIPLES OF BIOLOGY’

UNBROKEN continuity in the great chain of things is of course a postulate of the evolutionary philosophy. ‘Evolution being a universal process, one and continuous throughout all forms of existence, there can be no break, no change from one group of concrete phenomena to another, without a bridge of intermediate phenomena.’ The complete unification of knowledge demands that we should do more than show that one law of evolution explains the development of the solar system, of our own planet, of life at large, of mind, of society. It demands that we should trace the sequence of development not only throughout each division of our inquiry, but also from each division to the next. Our proper course would, therefore, be to outline the evolutionary process in the inorganic world, and then pass on to the organic across a bridge which should connect the two. Owing to the vast compass of his scheme,

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however, Spencer was compelled to omit altogether the discussion of the phenomena of inorganic evolution, and with it, the projected consideration of ‘the evolution of organic matter,’ as ‘the step preceding the evolution of living forms.’ The result is that we reach the phenomena of life not by a bridge, but by a leap. The required continuity fails at the outset.

Of the origin of life, Spencer speaks only tentatively. Rejecting the theory of the spontaneous generation of organic forms, he assumes the rise of organic matter out of inorganic under conditions no longer existing, and thence of ‘the earliest living things—probably minute units of protoplasm smaller than any the microscope reveals to us.’ Organic matter provides the physical basis of life. Yet ‘even to imagine those processes going on in organic matter out of which emerges the dynamic element of Life,’ is, Spencer admits, ‘impossible.’

With the phenomena of life in their simplest cognisable forms, we have, however, a fresh starting-point for systematic investigation. Every organism presents certain vital phenomena in its development and decay. The organic world as a whole presents an ensemble of such phenomena. In the interpretation of these we have to choose

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between two possible hypotheses. 'Either the multitudinous kinds of organisms which now exist, and the far more multitudinous kinds which have existed during past geologic ages, have been from time to time separately made; or they have arisen through actions such as we see habitually going on.' Spencer subjects the former hypothesis, that of Special Creation, to searching examination, and finds it untenable. The phenomena of life will thus have to be interpreted according to the alternative hypothesis as phenomena of evolution. The implication is not, however, that which is commonly supposed. In ordinary language, the evolution-theory is described as the naturalistic theory of the origin of things, as contrasted with the Special Creation theory, which is spoken of as supernaturalistic. But the evolution theory no less than the Special Creation theory demands a Cause, and finds that Cause inscrutable. The question merely is, 'How this inscrutable Cause has worked in the production of living forms.' Evolution interprets all the phenomena of life at large, in all their range and variety, as arising gradually, through the play of natural forces and in obedience to what, symbolically, we call natural laws.

Spencer, therefore, undertakes to exhibit the

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great general facts of organic life as illustrations of the law of evolution. The phenomena of life, whether we regard life in its totality or confine ourselves to any one of its phases, everywhere present those parallel movements towards increasing complexity and increasing unity which are formulated in that law. The lowest organisms are the simplest, and in them there is least interdependence among the parts which exist. Higher organisms show a greater degree of multiformity and a correspondingly greater degree of integration. In the highest organisms the greatest degree of complexity in unity has been reached. In the star-fish, for instance, we have a repetition of similar parts performing similar functions and having little vital interdependence. In man, we have many unlike parts, specialised to perform different functions, and thus, by a ‘physiological division of labour,’ carrying on the far ampler life of the organism as a whole. These ‘leading facts of organic evolution’ may further be presented in deductive form. Organic matter is characterised by extreme instability, and must, therefore, ‘be a substance which is beyond all others changeable by the forces acting on it from without.’ Changes which originate in differentiations thus brought about will go on cumulatively through the pro-



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cesses described as the Multiplication of Effects and Segregation.

Here the question arises, What is Life? In the most generalised statement, Life may be defined as 'the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations.' 'All vital actions, considered not separately but in their ensemble, have for their final purpose the balancing of certain outer processes by certain inner processes. There are external forces having a tendency to bring the matter of which living bodies consist, into that stable equilibrium shown by inorganic bodies; there are internal forces by which this tendency is constantly antagonised.' Life is perfect only when the correspondence between outer and inner is perfect. Life continues only so long as a sufficient correspondence continues. When the correspondence fails, life ends. Life, therefore, is a moving equilibrium, a balance between the forces of an organism and the forces of the environment. This definition, it must be understood, refers to phenomenal life only. Beneath the phenomenal manifestations there is a 'dynamic element in life' which is indeed 'its essential element.' But this dynamic and essential quality—'the noumenal reality which is revealed in the manifestations'—is unknown and



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unknowable. ‘Life in its essence,’ Spencer goes so far as to confess, dismissing in one phrase all materialistic theories of it, ‘cannot be conceived in physico-chemical terms.’ It is thus with phenomenal life only that we have to deal. But so far as life comes within the field of scientific investigation, the definition is sufficient.

It follows that the degree of life varies with the degree of correspondence. Life may be tested by its amount—that is, by the number, complexity, and length of the correspondences shown between inner and outer. In a low organism, even if the series of correspondences be long maintained, and life be thus preserved for a considerable time, the correspondences themselves are relatively few and simple. In higher organisms the correspondences become more and more numerous and complex. ‘The highest life’ is ‘that which, like our own, shows great complexity in the correspondences, great rapidity in the succession of them, and great length in the series of them.’

Fresh light is thus thrown on the evolution of life. Increase in heterogeneity throughout the universe at large means increase in the heterogeneity of the environments of many organisms. When the environment becomes more complex the internal forces of the organism must become

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more complex in order that the moving equilibrium may be maintained. Simple conditions in surroundings are easily balanced by simple response on the part of the organism. But change in the direction of greater intricacy on the one side must be met by change in the direction of increasing intricacy on the other, or the balance will be brought to an end. This fact may also be regarded from the opposite point of view. Every increase in the heterogeneity of an organism, however caused, makes for increase in the heterogeneity of the surroundings. With every advance in life the environment becomes larger and more comprehensive. The general truth is thus disclosed that 'the superior organisms inhabit the more complicated environments.'

We are thus introduced to the phenomena of adaptation. While organic types are marked by comparative stability, because they are the products of 'the almost infinite series of actions and reactions to which ancestral organisms have been exposed,' yet in the absence of a capacity for modification sufficient to assure adjustment to changing conditions no evolution of life would be possible. Here the principle of heredity comes into play; changes set up in an organism tending to reproduce themselves in succeeding genera-

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tions along with the more permanent characteristics of the organism in which they have arisen. In life at large, adaptation is brought about by both Direct and Indirect Equilibration. The action of the environment produces change, as in the skin of a labourer's hand. Functional change, within limits, produces structural change, for parts increase by use, as in the muscles of a blacksmith's arm, and diminish through disuse. Such ‘acquired characters’ being transmitted to offspring, tend, where conditions favour, to become permanent elements in the equilibration of a race. But with this principle only to guide us the larger part of the phenomena of evolving life must remain unexplained. Meanwhile, a fact of the profoundest importance comes into view. This is the fact of variation. No two individuals of a species are ever quite alike. However the variations may originate—which is a separate question—one result is clear. Such variations as assist an organism or a race in maintaining or perfecting equilibrium will give it an advantage in life as against other organisms or races in which they do not occur or in which other variations occur tending to destroy or impair equilibrium. ‘Those individuals whose functions are most out of equilibrium with the modified aggregate of ex-

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ternal forces, will be those to die; and those will survive whose functions happen to be most nearly in equilibrium with the modified aggregate of external forces. But this survival of the fittest implies the multiplication of the fittest. . . . And by the continual destruction of the individuals least capable of maintaining their equilibria . . . there must eventually be reached an altered type completely in equilibrium with the altered conditions.'

Concerning these generalisations two remarks have to be made. Spencer's doctrine of Indirect Equilibration, or the Survival of the Fittest, is, it will be seen, a restatement of Darwin's doctrine of Natural Selection. As early as 1852, in his essay, 'A Theory of Population,' Spencer had himself come within measurable distance of Darwin's great contribution to biology. But the full significance of the idea then expressed—that 'among human beings the survival of those who are the select of their generation is a cause of development'—was unperceived by him until he read *The Origin of Species*. Natural Selection was then absorbed into his system as a part of the universal process towards equilibrium.

In the second place it should be noted that in relying upon the theory of the transmission of 'acquired characters,' Spencer committed himself

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to a position which, though commonly accepted at the time, has since been vigorously challenged by many practical scientists. Whether such alleged transmission is a fact remains a question dividing biologists, and upon which it would be impertinent for one who is not a biologist to hazard an opinion. Spencer to the end fought hard for his view; and it was natural that he should have done so, since the inheritance of functionally-produced characters is, as we shall see, a vital principle in his philosophy.

Considered in its widest bearings, the law of equilibration will be found to lead to conclusions of the utmost importance. That any race may continue to exist, it is necessary that its preservative forces shall successfully balance the forces which tend to destroy it. Now the race-preservative forces are two: the power of each unit to preserve itself, which we may call individuation; and its power to propagate other members of the race, which we may call genesis. Spencer discovered that there is a ‘necessary antagonism’ between these two powers—that one acts at the expense of the other. His law is that they vary inversely. When the organism is low, there will be little individual ability to contend with external dangers; and for this inability compensa-

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tion must be provided by great fertility, or the race will die out. In this case a high death-rate will be offset by a high birth-rate. Where a high degree of organisation brings much capacity for self-preservation, a correspondingly low degree of fertility will suffice to maintain the race. In this case a low birth-rate will be enough to balance the low death-rate. He shows deductively that 'ability to multiply' must decrease 'as ability to maintain individual life increases'; the force expended on individuation being taken from reproduction. Thus we reach the law of declining fertility—that the higher the organism, the lower the race-increase. By this law, as applied to the multiplication of the human race, Spencer overthrew the Malthusian doctrine that population everlastingly tends to outrun its means of support, and that the evils of over-population are inherent in the very conditions of life. The movement of the human race towards more and more complete equilibrium with its surroundings, physical and social, thus reveals itself as a movement towards an ideal condition in which, death-rate and rate of reproduction being both reduced to a minimum, the largest possible amount of life may be achieved with the least possible expense to the individual.

## CHAPTER IV

### ‘THE PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOLOGY’

FAILURE to establish that inter-connection among all classes of phenomena, which is a condition of the complete unification of knowledge, is again encountered when we turn from biology to psychology. If we pass from the phenomena of the inorganic to those of the organic world not by a bridge but by a leap, it is by another leap that we have to pass from the phenomena of life in general to those of consciousness. The thorough-going evolutionist having already assumed the potentiality of life in matter is equally compelled to assume the potentiality of mind in life. However resolutely we may seek to affiliate psychology upon biology, we must, therefore, start on our psychological investigations from a fresh point of departure. Whether even then we can hope to pursue our inquiry without check or break—whether, for instance, we can satisfactorily explain the higher faculties of man as results of antecedents in lower forms of intelligence—is a



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question which sooner or later must be raised, but cannot now be discussed. To prove such unbroken sequence was of course an essential part of Spencer's plan. 'From the simple reflex action by which the infant sucks, up to the elaborate reasoning of the adult man, the progress is by daily infinitesimal steps.' By such infinitesimal steps, from 'the automatic actions of the lowest creatures' to 'the highest conscious actions of the human race,' we must trace the development of psychological phenomena in life at large.

The conception of psychology as only a special part of a general science of life based upon the principles of evolution, thus involves a total change in point of view and method. The adult human intelligence can no longer be treated as isolated and unique. To understand mind, we must learn how mind has evolved. The highest and most complex manifestations of consciousness must be explained by reference to the lower and more simple, and these, again, by reference to the still lower and more simple, until we have succeeded in tracking psychological phenomena back to the point where they are undistinguishable from the merely physical.

Now consciousness as we know it depends upon and is correlated with the nervous system.



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Spencer therefore opens his inquiry on the physiological side. He subjects the structure and functions of the nervous system to exhaustive analysis, and shows that its evolution conforms to the general law of evolution, since, while in its most rudimentary forms it consists of ‘a few threads and minute centres’ and is ‘very much scattered,’ it exhibits in development increase in relative size, and in the complexity, variety, and concentration of its connections. This done we have to turn to a class of facts ‘absolutely without any perceptible or conceivable community of nature’ with these physical facts. The subjective aspects of those phenomena which, objectively viewed, are ‘as purely physical as the absorption of nutriment or the circulation of the blood,’ have now to be considered. ‘The changes which, regarded as modes of the *Non-ego*, have been expressed in terms of motion, have now, regarded as modes of the *Ego*, to be expressed in terms of feeling.’

Physical science deals with the connection among phenomena in the outer world; biology with the connection among phenomena in the organism. The business of psychology is with the connection between these connections. Whatever relations appear in consciousness connote relations outside;

and psychology is concerned with the relations between the two sets of relations. Psychological phenomena thus emerge as a result of that 'continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations' in which, according to previous definition, life at large has been found to consist. The evolution of life, biologically considered, is due to the increasing complexity of these relations. But it is up to a certain stage only that the required adjustment can be maintained in an automatic way. A point is presently reached at which the complexity becomes so great that automatic adjustment is insufficient. Here consciousness begins to appear. The phenomena of intelligence therefore present only another aspect of the general phenomena of life, in that, 'regarded under every variety of aspect, intelligence is found to consist in the establishment of correspondences between relations in the organism and relations in the environment.' As the outer relations continue to increase in number, complexity, and heterogeneity, so the inner relations must continue to increase in number, complexity, and heterogeneity to keep pace with them; and psychical evolution is the result.

The various degrees and modes of intelligence commonly known as instinct, memory, reason,

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emotion, the will, must therefore be exhibited as stages in the evolution of intelligence as thus conceived. They must be explained ‘in terms of the relation which obtains between inner and outer phenomena.’

Certain fundamental truths must be recognised at the outset. The evolution of mind, no less than the evolution of body, is brought about by the converse of the organism with its environment. Now the persistence of the connection between states of consciousness must be proportionate to the persistence of the connection between the external agencies to which they answer. Mental states tend to cohere according to the degree of constancy characterising the connections among the phenomena to which they refer. It is on this principle that we explain the fact that ‘when any two psychical states occur in immediate succession, an effect is produced, such as that if the first subsequently recurs, there is a certain tendency for the second to follow it.’ This, it will be seen, is only a fresh statement of the familiar law of the Association of Ideas. But besides being thus grounded upon the general conception of the relations of consciousness and environment, this law undergoes great amplification when affiliated upon the doctrine of evolu-

tion. We have now something more than a theory of the association of ideas in the individual. The results of repeated experiences of the connections among external phenomena, being transmitted as modifications of nervous structure from generation to generation, become organised in the race. The implications of this principle we shall note directly. We have first to outline the broad stages of psychical evolution.

When in the lowest living creature a single stimulus from the environment is followed by a single responsive motion, we have what is called reflex action. This is the 'rudimentary psychical act, not yet differentiated from a physical act.' This 'nervous shock' must be regarded as the primordial unit of consciousness. Instinct is reflex action in a higher phase of development. It arises when, with increase in the complication of the relations between organism and surroundings, 'a combined cluster of stimuli produce automatically a combined cluster of motions.' We have seen that the more frequently psychical states occur in a certain order, the stronger becomes their tendency to cohere in that order. This tendency being inherited, there will ultimately result in any given race of creatures an automatic connection of nervous actions corre-

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sponding to the external relations perpetually experienced, and thus an average balance between the activities of the individual creature and the demands of that environment, under the influence of which the race to which it belongs has been moulded. But the correspondence of inner and outer, which is thus regular enough in the simpler forms of life, becomes irregular with the increase of complexity on the one side and the other. With advancing heterogeneity and decreasing frequency of occurrence in the groups of external relations to which inner adjustments have to be made, the response of organism to environment ceases to be automatically fixed and certain. Adjustments are therefore made slowly and with hesitation, and in this way conscious perception, memory, and reason begin to arise. That conscious perception, memory, and reason grow out of instinct is shown by the familiar converse fact that actions which at first are performed deliberately and by their aid become automatic or instinctive through frequent repetition; conscious adjustments which originate when the co-ordination between inner and outer is broken pass back into unconscious adjustments when it is re-established. The genesis of the feelings is similarly explained on the principle that when psychical changes

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become too complicated to be simply automatic, they become incipiently sensational. Once more, the development of the will is only another aspect of the same general process of evolution. When through increasing complexity and imperfect coherence of relations actions are no longer performed without hesitation, there results antagonism among nascent motor changes. The element of volition thus emerges; but it disappears again when actions which were once voluntary are so frequently repeated that they become automatic. On the ground thus taken, the freedom of the will, as commonly understood, must be rejected as a subjective illusion. 'Will is no more an existence separate from the predominant feeling, than a king is an existence separate from the man occupying the throne.'

Such being the basis of Spencer's evolutionary psychology, his treatment of the question at issue between the empiricists and the intuitionists will be foreseen. The empiricists assert that all ideas without exception are derived from experience. The intuitionists reply that certain of our ideas transcend experience and are innate. Spencer offers an eirenicon in the doctrine that ideas which have arisen through immense accumulations of experience in the race may



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become so completely organised as to appear as intuitions in the individual. Such, he argues, is the genetic history of our ideas of space and time. The indissoluble mental relations constituting such ideas have been formed in response to external relations which are absolutely constant and universal. To these relations, therefore, all organisms have been exposed at all instants of their waking lives. The ideas of space and time, then, being the outcome of an absolutely constant and universal relation between the organism and the environment, are consolidated into mental states, the cohesion of which cannot be destroyed. In the same way Spencer reaches his theory of the Universal Postulate or Test of Truth. In an ultimate analysis, it is contended, we accept a proposition as axiomatic when its negation is inconceivable; and the negation of a proposition is inconceivable when the terms of it have been so perpetually connected in universal experience as to have become indissolubly welded together. In thus explaining individual intuitions as consolidated results of racial experience, Spencer of course rests his case upon the supposition that the results of experience are transmitted in the form of changes in nervous organisation. In considering his interpretation, we have therefore to

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remember that, as I have said, this theory is still under discussion.

Spencer's aim in his *Psychology* is to trace the evolution of psychical phenomena side by side with that of their physical mechanism, as two aspects of one and the same process. He is, however, most solicitous to guard himself against the charge of materialism which might therefore be laid against him. As we know life only through its phenomenal manifestations, so we know mind only through its phenomenal manifestations; and as there is a dynamic element in life which eludes all our analysis, so there is such a dynamic element in mind. The 'subject' cannot be resolved into states of consciousness. It is 'the unknown permanent nexus . . . which holds states of consciousness together.' The Ego which continuously survives its changing states can only be regarded as 'that portion of the Unknowable Power which is statically conditioned in special nervous structures pervaded by a dynamically conditioned portion of the Unknowable Power called Energy.' No explanation can therefore be given of the connection between intelligence and its mechanism. After subjection to the most searching analysis, 'mind still continues to us something without any kinship to other things.'



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‘ Were we compelled to choose between the alternatives of translating mental phenomena into physical phenomena, or of translating physical phenomena into mental phenomena, the latter alternative would seem the more acceptable of the two ’; the translation of ‘ so-called Spirit into so-called Matter ’ being, indeed, ‘ wholly impossible. ’ But Mind and Matter are only symbols of an Ultimate Reality underlying both; and the whole question at issue is in fact ‘ nothing more than the question whether these symbols should be expressed in terms of those or those in terms of these—a question scarcely worth deciding, since either answer leaves us as completely outside of the reality as we were at first. ’

Whatever may be made of this contention, it is evident that in Spencer’s psychology we are a long way away from the crude materialism which once taught that the brain secretes thought as the liver secretes bile, and from all attempts to establish the identity of the physical accompaniments of consciousness as we know it and consciousness itself. Those who uphold the spiritualistic view are well entitled to describe Spencer’s concessions as enormous and far-reaching.

## CHAPTER V

### ‘THE PRINCIPLES OF SOCIOLOGY’

FROM the phenomena of life and mind as exhibited in the individual organism, Spencer passes to those even more complex phenomena which are presented by aggregates of individuals living in the associated state. We thus enter the field of what he calls super-organic evolution. But in this field we must pursue the same methods of induction and deduction. The aim of Sociology, or the science of society, is to establish the widest possible generalisations concerning the origin, growth, and significance of social structures and functions, and to interpret these by reference to the ultimate laws of universal evolution.

Our starting-point is the conception of the organic nature of all society. This is fully worked out in Spencer's theory of the Social Organism. In four important ways he shows that a society resembles an individual organism. In the first place, it increases in mass. Secondly,

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while it grows, it increases continually in complexity of structure. Thirdly, this increase of complexity is accompanied by corresponding integration; the parts become more and more interdependent, till at length the life and activity of each part is involved with the life and activity of the rest. Finally, the life and development of the whole are independent of the life and development of the component units, which are born, grow, give birth to other units, and die, while the body politic continues to live, grow, and increase in the organic completeness of its structure. Further analogies are also indicated. In the social organism there is a sustaining system, composed of its industrial agencies; a distributing system, composed of its commercial agencies; a regulative system, composed of its various governmental agencies. It is true that at several important points the comparison fails. Societies have no specific external forms; their units are dispersed individuals, while the living tissue of an individual organism constitutes a continuous mass; social units are capable of moving from place to place, while the ultimate living elements of an individual organism are usually fixed in their relative positions; and—more fundamental than all—in a society all the members are endowed with feeling,

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while in the body of an animal the power of feeling is limited to a specialised tissue. These differences—the importance of which Spencer attempts with much ingenuity to minimise—suffice to show that, suggestive as the parallelism is, it may easily become misleading. It is probable, indeed, that Spencer's influence has led many sociologists to take too narrowly biological a view of their subject. But the conception of the organic nature of society is the foundation of the Spencerian sociology. That it is essentially an evolutionary conception is evident, since it excludes 'the notion of manufacture or artificial arrangement,' and asserts instead the principle of 'natural development.'

Society, then, like the individual organism, evolves; that is, it undergoes in the course of development both differentiation and integration. In the lowest social groups, organisation is at most only rudimentary. Practically homogeneous in structure—for the only marked differences are those which accompany difference of sex—a savage tribe is scarcely more than a loose cluster of families living together indeed, but exhibiting little interdependence. Specialisation has hardly begun. Like parts carry on like functions. 'Every man is warrior, hunter, fisher-

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man, tool-maker, builder; every woman performs the same drudgeries’; while, except within the family group itself, there is little indication of any distinction of governing and governed. Mutual dependence among these unspecialised units is in fact so slight that ‘every family is self-sufficing, and, save for purposes of aggression and defence, might as well live apart from the rest.’ At the other extreme, we have our enormously complex modern societies which, in both their political and their industrial systems, present a vast and ever-increasing number of highly specialised parts performing unlike functions as interdependent elements of an organic whole. Thus social progress is brought under the general law of evolution. Beginning in a condition of relative simplicity, social aggregates, and presently the larger aggregates which arise from the compounding and recompounding of these, develop through successive differentiations and integrations in heterogeneity, definiteness, and coherence. Two important truths here come to light. In the social, as in the individual organism, repetition of similar parts denotes a relatively low stage of development. In both cases, specialisation of parts can arise only on condition that, for the due performance of its own particular functions, each

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organ shall be relieved by other organs of the necessity of carrying on other functions.

As super-organic evolution presents the same essential characteristics as organic evolution, it is a natural inference that it arises from the operation of the same causes. Interpreting social progress as the necessary result of the instability of the homogeneous, the multiplication of effects, and segregation, Spencer is able to restate his generalisations in deductive form, and to affiliate his sociology upon the general body of his philosophy. Every law of the evolutionary process will thus be found illustrated on a gigantic scale in the intricate phases of social change. In the domain of the super-organic, therefore, as in that of the organic, 'equilibration is the final result' of the 'transformations which an evolving aggregate undergoes.' The tendency of all social development, through countless rhythmical variations, is towards a state of moving equilibrium. Each society displays this process 'in the continuous adjustment of its population to its means of subsistence'; in the industrial phenomena of supply and demand; in the gradual moulding of governmental institutions into more and more complete harmony with the natures of the people. As in the individual, so in the social organism,

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functional modifications are followed by modifications of structure. As in the one case, so in the other, ‘increase of heterogeneity must go on while there remain any outer relations affecting the organism which are unbalanced by inner relations.’ Each increment of heterogeneity in the individual as social unit therefore implies ‘some increase of heterogeneity in the arrangement of the aggregate of individuals.’ But the perpetual interaction between the individual and the aggregate must, in the course of ages, bring about such corresponding modifications on the one side and the other as to lead at length to an approximately complete adjustment between the two.

The most important aspect of this evolutionary process is the gradual shaping of the individual to the requirements of the associated state. The social man is the product of society. It is by the prolonged and severe discipline of corporate life that the aggressive egoism of primitive savagery has been restrained and controlled, and the altruistic nature fostered and strengthened. Developing civilisation results from developing humanity, and in turn makes for the further development of humanity.

In this making of the social man much has



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throughout depended upon the elementary conditions of group-life. Potential sociality presupposed, the origin of all society is to be found in the fact that association gave men an immense advantage in the struggle for existence. By mutual aid, alike in warlike and in peaceful activities, they were able to resist enemies and to provide for wants far more successfully by combination than separately. The better the association the greater the advantage. But co-operation in its simplest form implies some amount of self-denial, and with the growth of co-operation, as society evolves, the necessity for self-denial continues up to a certain point to increase. To gain the advantage of the associated state men must learn to subordinate personal welfare to the welfare of the group.

So important indeed does subordination become that powerful agencies of coercion begin to evolve as soon as group-life passes into permanent form. Society takes complete control of the individual and proceeds to break down his crude egoism and to drill him into line with its own needs. It does this by bringing to bear upon him the combined force of state-authority, with its temporal punishments, of religion, with its supernatural rewards and penalties, and of custom, with its

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less defined but hardly less effective instruments of social approval and condemnation. Of such agencies, the first originates in fear of the living ruler; the second, in fear of the dead ancestor or chief; the third, in fear of the group. They have, of course, undergone enormous transformations in the process of social differentiation and integration. But whatever shapes they may have assumed, the political, ecclesiastical, and ceremonial institutions in which they have been respectively embodied have always been the great factors in the evolution of the social man. The race has been educated by force and fear.

It must not, however, be assumed that man is to be permanently subjected to the tyranny of such external authorities. ‘Within each embodied set of restraining agencies . . . there gradually evolves a special kind of disembodied control, which eventually becomes independent.’ Political government habituates men ‘to obey regulations conducive to social order’; there presently emerges ‘a consciousness that these regulations have not simply an extrinsic authority derived from a ruler’s will, but have an intrinsic authority derived from their utility’; the dictates of the king, often arbitrary and irrational, ‘grow into an established system of laws, which formu-

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late the needful limitations to men's actions arising from one another's claims'; and these limitations 'men more and more recognise and conform to' without any thought of regal command or parliamentary enactment. 'Out of the supposed wishes of the ancestral ghost, which now and again developing into the traditional commands of some expanded ghost of a great man, become divine injunctions, arises the set of requirements classed as religious'; little by little within these 'there evolve the rules we distinguish as moral'; such rules, at first obeyed only because of their supposedly sacred origin, come ultimately to be regarded as imperative because of 'their observed utility in controlling certain parts of human conduct . . . not controlled, or little controlled, by civil law.' Similarly with the ceremonial code. 'From observances which, in their primitive forms, express partly subordination to a superior and partly attachment to him, and which, spreading downwards, become general forms of behaviour, there finally come observances expressing a proper regard for the individualities of other persons, and a true sympathy in their welfare.' Social evolution in its higher stages, therefore, means the gradual liberation of men from all forms of control by external autho-

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rity. But this can be achieved only in proportion as—the discipline of external authority having done its work—men may safely be left to be a law unto themselves.

A further fact of great importance has now to be recognised. From pressure of population and other causes has arisen an almost incessant struggle for existence among social groups. This struggle has throughout been the main factor in the compounding and recompounding of such groups into larger and larger aggregates and in social consolidation. War, therefore, has everywhere played an enormous part in social evolution, for it is mainly by war that great communities have been formed and their structures developed. But in proportion as social integration advances, war necessarily declines. As an agent of progress it is in fact self-destructive. By the formation of larger and larger organic masses it brings about industrial co-operation over wider and wider areas. We may therefore anticipate a time—far distant though it may be—when the struggle for existence among civilised nations—themselves interdependent parts of a vast industrial community—will entirely disappear. ‘As, when small tribes were welded into great tribes, the head-chief stopped intertribal war-

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fare; as, when small feudal governments became subject to a king, feudal wars were prevented by him; so, in time to come, a federation of the highest nations, exercising supreme authority (already foreshadowed by occasional agreements among "the Powers") may, by forbidding wars between any of its constituent nations, put an end to the rebarbarisation which is continually undoing civilisation.'

The results, in the internal life of society, of this world-movement from militarism to industrialism must also be noted. Social structures depend on social needs and activities. With the decline of the struggle for existence and the growth of mutual aid among nations, political organisations therefore pass out of forms appropriate to a state of almost chronic warfare to forms appropriate to a state of well-established peace. Great prominence is given in the Spencerian sociology to the contrast between the militant and the industrial types of society. It is true, indeed, that during social evolution there has 'habitually been a mingling of the two,' and that no civilised nation has yet advanced beyond the transitional stage. Yet 'it is possible to trace with due clearness those opposite characters which distinguish them in their respective com-

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plete developments.’ While the struggle for existence continues, the first concern of the state is its own preservation. Everything else is made secondary to that. Hence, in the militant type of society, the individual is owned by the state; corporate action is secured by despotic centralised control; life is ordered on the principles of regimentation; and government pursues the citizen into the details of his private interests and enterprises. But when the struggle for existence subsides, and the state is no longer jeopardised from without, all need, and therefore all ethical warrant, for the coercion of the individual by the state necessarily lapse. Hence in the industrial type of society ‘the citizen’s individuality’ emerges as the primary consideration; the protection of this becomes ‘the society’s essential duty’; despotic centralised control and all the elaborate machinery of regimentation disappear; the range of governmental activity shrinks to the task of maintaining ‘the conditions requisite for the highest individual life’; and the state ceases to interfere with the citizen’s private concerns. The inference is obvious. The evolution of society from the régime of enforced co-operation resulting from militarism, to the régime of voluntary co-operation resulting from



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industrialism, is necessarily attended by the reduction of state control to the minimum required for the purposes of co-operative life, and the expansion of individual liberty to the maximum possible in the associated state. Following the lines of social evolution, Spencer thus reaches that principle of individualism which, clearly enunciated in his very first essay—the *Letters on the Proper Sphere of Government*—remained throughout the central thesis of all his political teaching. Any movement towards the enlargement of the power of the state, and therefore all forms of socialism, are thus condemned by him as retrograde efforts to revive in industrial communities a form of social organisation fitted only to the régime of militarism. This doctrine is further reinforced by the principle of specialisation. The true function of government is the maintenance of equitable relations among citizens; and as it fits itself more and more completely for the due performance of this, it becomes of necessity correspondingly unfit for anything else. Moreover, Spencer finds his analogy between the social and individual organisms fall into line with his argument precisely at the point where it most conspicuously breaks down. For the individual organism has a corporate conscious-



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ness, while in the social organism consciousness exists only in the individual members. In a community, therefore, ‘the corporate life must . . . be subservient to the lives of the parts, instead of the lives of the parts being subservient to the corporate life.’ The individual does not exist for the state. The state exists for the individual.

## CHAPTER VI

### ‘THE PRINCIPLES OF ETHICS’

THE science of ethics, according to Spencer, has for its subject-matter those ‘last stages in the evolution of conduct’ which are ‘displayed by the highest type of being, when he is forced, by increase of numbers, to live more and more in presence of his fellows.’ Conduct at large is distinguished as the adjustment of acts to ends, and the evolution of conduct is seen to conform to the general law of evolution, since, as we ascend the scale of life, we find increase at once of heterogeneity and of definiteness in such adjustments. These adjustments may be contemplated under a threefold aspect. There are, first, those which subserve individual life. There are, secondly, those which subserve the life of the species. These two kinds of conduct, which are throughout interdependent and therefore evolve together, comprise all the adjustments that are called for in the case of

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non-gregarious creatures. But the moment we pass from creatures leading solitary to those leading associated lives, a third set of adjustments is required—those which subserve the life of the group. With the evolution of the associated state these often become of pre-eminent importance. But those adjustments which make for the life of the individual and for the life of the race are, in the vast majority of cases, more successfully made in the associated state than in the solitary state. Co-operation brings with it the opportunity of a fuller life for all the units. ‘Living together arose because, on the average, it proved more advantageous to each than living apart; and this implies that maintenance of combination is maintenance of the conditions to more satisfactory living than the combined persons would otherwise have.’

An important truth is thus brought to light. The evolution of conduct—the more and more complete adaptation of means to more and more varied ends—has clearly tended from the first to increasing fulness of life. Adopting for the moment the language of teleology, we may therefore say that increasing fulness of life is the ‘end’ of evolution. This is an induction from the phenomena of evolving life. We may now trans-

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late the conclusion reached into the vocabulary of ethical judgment. Conduct which is relatively highly evolved is what we call good conduct. Conduct which we describe as good 'rises to conduct we conceive as best' when it 'simultaneously achieves the greatest totality of life in self, in offspring, and in fellow men.' Otherwise phrased, the 'highest conduct is that which conduces to the greatest length, breadth, and completeness of life.'

A principle of the profoundest moral significance is thus introduced. Following the evolution of life from stage to stage, we find that conduct is adjusted less and less to immediate and personal ends merely, and more and more to ends that are remote and impersonal. This means that in the evolution of life the impulses of the moment are more and more overruled by impulses of wider derivation. In cases of conflict, this implies subordination of the claims of the present to those of the future in the conduct of the individual acting in the interests of self; subordination of self for the welfare of the species; subordination of the unit for the preservation of the group. The conclusion is that, speaking generally, life is made fuller and richer—the 'end' of conduct is more perfectly attained—when the earlier-evolved

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and therefore lower impulses are governed by those that are later-evolved and therefore higher. The ‘end’ is not fulness of individual life, but fulness of life at large.

If, however, fulness of life is to be postulated not only as the ‘end’ of evolution but also as a desirable end—if, in other words, we may properly consider it as our duty to co-operate with the processes which make towards it—the assumption is clearly required that life as a whole brings with it more pleasure than pain. We are therefore committed to Hedonism. ‘There is no escape from the admission that in calling good the conduct which subserves life, and bad the conduct which hinders or destroys it, we are inevitably asserting that conduct is good or bad as its total effects are pleasurable or painful.’

In this way Spencer joins hand with those who assert that virtue is not an end in itself but the means to an end, and who hold, as Mill put it, ‘that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong, as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness.’ In regard to the first of the two great questions with which ethical theory is specially concerned—that of the ultimate standard of conduct—he thus adopts the

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utilitarian point of view. In common with the utilitarians in general, he therefore falls into several serious mistakes. Neglecting the element of character and motive, he treats ethics as concerned only with 'conduct considered objectively as producing good or bad results.' He fails to grasp the fundamental difference in quality between different kinds of happiness, and to see that, as pleasure varies with character, it can be properly evaluated only when character is taken into account. He quite overlooks the enormously important problem of the reaction of action on character. And he distinctly enunciates the principle that the extent to which any concomitant of pain enters anywhere into the consequences of an action is the measure of the extent to which it fails to reach the standard of the absolutely right—a view which leads him into some extraordinary vagaries of reasoning. Yet he breaks at one most important point with the crude expediency-morality of the older utilitarian schools. These had not advanced beyond the empirical stage of ethical inquiry. They had rested in generalisations, and had therefore in their interpretation of conduct got no further than the direct estimation of results. Spencer, as we have already seen, maintained that in every

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science the work of induction has to be completed by deduction. In his view there could thus be no real science of ethics until the principles of conduct had been translated from truths of the empirical into truths of the rational order. ‘I conceive it to be the business of moral science,’ he wrote to Mill, ‘to deduce from the laws of life and the conditions of existence what kinds of conduct necessarily tend to produce happiness and what kinds to produce unhappiness. Having done this,’ he significantly adds, ‘its deductions are to be recognised as laws of conduct, and are to be conformed to, irrespective of a direct estimation of happiness or misery.’ This marks an immense advance upon the older Hedonistic position. Spencer’s attempt to reconstruct naturalistic ethics upon a deductive basis is undoubtedly to be regarded as his most important contribution to moral theory. He demurred, indeed, and rightly, when Mill classed him among the anti-utilitarians. Yet his ethical system manifestly rests on foundations widely different from those of expediency, since, while recognising happiness as the ultimate end of conduct, he detached the principles of right living from all consideration of happiness as its proximate end. Though accepting the Hedonistic criterion, he was thus able, to



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the great advantage to his system, to reject entirely the Hedonistic calculus.

To the other great question of ethical theory—that of the faculty within us which answers to the distinction between right and wrong—Spencer of course replies in terms of his evolutionary psychology. He interprets the genesis of the moral sense as he has already interpreted that of our ideas of space and time. Our ‘moral intuitions are the results of accumulated experiences of utility, gradually . . . organised and consolidated through all past generations of the human race. These experiences, it is argued, ‘have been producing corresponding nervous modifications which, by continued transmission and accumulation, have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition—certain emotions responding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the individual experiences of utility,’ and have indeed become in the modern civilised adult ‘quite independent of conscious experience.’ In this way he once more enters the field as mediator between the empiricists and the intuitionists. As his account of the genesis and growth of conscience must, in any event, stand or fall with the theory of the transmissibility of acquired characters, it is evident that for the present it remains

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in the domain of hypothesis. But even if we grant the foundation of his argument, it is still open to question whether the proposed interpretation is not more ingenious than convincing, and whether any doctrine which rests on the mere consolidation of the results of the experiences of utility in the race will satisfy us as an adequate explanation of the authoritativeness of conscience and its emphatic report of the difference between the expedient and the right. At the same time, Spencer's system gains much because, so far as the individual is concerned, he is able to yield so much to intuitivism.

As the end of conduct is complete living, and as this end can be achieved only when all activities, as they subserve the life of individual, of species, and of group, are duly harmonised, it is necessary to define the conditions pre-requisite to complete living, and to define them in such a way as to take account of all the activities involved. This is done in the formula of absolute justice—that ‘every man is free to do that which he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man.’ Each individual is thus conceived as having a right to carry on all the activities which conduce to his own life and to that of his offspring unimpeded save by the collateral exercise of the

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same right by his fellows. This 'law of equal freedom' is to be regarded on *a priori* and *a posteriori* grounds, as the 'ultimate ethical principle,' having 'an authority transcending every other.' It is thus 'the supreme moral law.' This law will indeed be qualified among individuals by the exercise of beneficence, for life cannot reach its highest until altruism has free play, and the 'requirements of equity' are 'supplemented by the promptings of kindness' and 'spontaneous efforts' on the part of each 'to further the welfare of others.' Reciprocal aid among individuals is thus given a large place in the development of the completest living. But the exercise of beneficence must always remain a private function. The function of the state is limited to the enforcement of the primary law of social co-operation—the law of justice. Its one business, as we have already said, is the maintenance of equitable relations among the members of a community. It can exercise beneficence only by infringing upon the rights of the individual and thus breaking the very law it exists to secure. The bearings of this doctrine upon the problem of the functions of the state and the limits of legislation will be obvious. Spencer again reaches the principle of individualism.

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That moral evolution is necessarily bound up with social evolution is an inference which we cannot fail to draw. We have shown that social evolution has throughout been a process towards ever-increasing solidarity (or the production of larger and larger organic wholes made up of interdependent parts), the decline of the struggle for existence between group and group, and the corresponding extension of industrial co-operation over ever-widening areas. Now, moral ideals and sentiments arise in response to demands, and moral sanction is stage by stage given to the kinds of activity called for by the average requirements of life. It is clear, therefore, that the gradual evolution of the conditions of complete living must be entirely contingent upon a gradual change in society from the military to the industrial régime. So long as the struggle for existence continues between group and group, the right of the individual to the unimpeded exercise of his own activity must, as we have said, inevitably be over-ridden by the claims of the group; while the spirit of antagonism kept alive by the struggle must hinder the growth of sympathetic feelings even within the group itself. Moral evolution therefore depends upon the decline of warlike activities and the concurrent reconstruction of

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society on an industrial and completely peaceful basis. Only thus can the rule of absolute justice be established and the exercise of beneficence become general.

We are thus brought round again to the phenomena of adaptation. Moral evolution, like biological and psychological evolution, is the result of the converse of the organism with its environment; the environment in this case being the whole evolving fabric of society and civilisation. Moral evolution is therefore only a phase of the universal tendency towards equilibration. 'The highest type of living being, no less than all lower types, must go on moulding itself to those requirements which circumstances impose.' How long will this process of equilibration continue? Spencer replies that 'the adaptation of man's nature to the conditions of his existence cannot cease until the internal forces we know as feelings are in equilibrium with the external forces they encounter'; until, in other words, 'a state of human nature and social organisation' is reached 'such that the individual has no desires but those which may be satisfied without exceeding his proper sphere of action, while society maintains no restraints but those which the individual voluntarily respects.' That sense of obligation which we distinguish as

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moral is a late product of evolving social life. The earlier forms of coercion and restraint are, as we have seen, those created by fear of outer authority—of the gods, of political rulers, of society. Out of these slowly emerges the moral form of coercion and restraint, which is that inner compulsion or inhibition which follows upon the realisation of the intrinsic character of actions and their necessary bearings upon life. Yet this sense of moral obligation is itself only a stage in the higher evolution of man. The equilibration between the individual and the conditions of the associated state must continue until moral conduct becomes purely natural and instinctive, and all sense of compulsion and restraint, even that which arises from within, altogether disappears. Spencer thus anticipates a final balance (‘complete’ in his earlier view, ‘approximately complete,’ according to his later and more tempered statement) between men’s natures and the highest possible form of the associated life. This is presented as the evolutionary millennium. The vision may seem attractive. Yet on the other hand it may surely be urged that a world without moral effort, and therefore without moral enthusiasm, would after all be a consummation hardly to be wished.

## CHAPTER VII

### ON THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION

WE have seen that, while asserting an Absolute Reality behind appearance as the ultimate fact of facts, Spencer held that this Reality 'transcends not only human knowledge but human conception.' The Power manifested in the phenomenal universe being itself inscrutable, philosophy must rest content with the study of its manifestations. All questions of the theologico-metaphysical class are thus relegated to the category of the Unknowable. But religion is practically universal. It has at all times filled an immense place in human life. It has everywhere played an enormous part in the development of civilisation. It has, therefore, to be investigated as a social phenomenon. We are thus committed to an inquiry into its origin and evolution. This will lead in turn to some consideration of its probable changes in the future.

The religious consciousness is concerned with that which lies beyond the sphere of sense. What



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suggests the thought of agencies transcending human perception? How does the supernatural evolve out of the natural?

Spencer regards ancestor-worship as the ultimate root of all religious ideas and ceremonies. Such ancestor-worship is explained by the Ghost-theory. The savage dreams. What he dreams is to him as real as his waking experience. Thus arises the conception of another world—the spirit world. If he dreams of his dead father, he accepts the dream image as his father's double or ghost. The other self which wanders away in dreams and returns to the body, and which becomes visible in shadow and reflection, is conceived as leaving the body permanently in death, yet surviving in a fainter, though still material, form. Hence arises the conception of an after-life. But such after-life is, of course, the counterpart of this life. The double carries with it into the shadow-world its earthly appetites, desires, passions. The relations of the son to the living father are maintained, after the father's death, with his ghost. The dead man will need food and companionship. Flesh, bread, and wine are laid upon his grave, and there his horse and dog, sometimes his slaves, occasionally his wife, are slain, that their spirits may accompany his own. Sacrifices thus

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originate which are continued with the further object of pleasing and propitiating the dead man, and of making him friendly to the living. The grave, as the spot which the double is most likely to haunt, becomes a place of special resort and veneration. It assumes a sacred character. For purposes of identification it is at first marked by stakes or stones. As wealth and skill increase, it is walled in and covered for better protection. The grave grows into a shrine; the shrine into a temple. Hither the living repair to minister by oblations to the dead man's needs or desires, to gratify him by reciting or chanting his praises, to petition him for help. Here we have the beginnings of religious worship and ritual. As a natural result of the influence of memory and lengthening tradition, the ghost undergoes continual expansion, and little by little becomes endowed with distinctly superhuman characteristics. Differences in rank and power presently arise as the inevitable consequence of such differences among living men. The ghost of the strong man, or head of the tribe, becomes the chief of the tribal ghosts and the object of general tribal worship. With the compounding and recompounding of social groups effected by war—changes in the ghost-world following changes in society—the gradations be-

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come more numerous and more regular. In course of time, while the ghosts of ordinary ancestors remain gods, the ghosts of mighty conquerors and rulers grow into gods-in-chief. Mythologies and pantheons are thus consolidated. Finally, with the further progress of moral and intellectual evolution, the national god-in-chief becomes the one universal God. The cult of apotheosised ancestors gives birth to polytheism. Then when the scattered supernatural powers are merged in one supreme power, monotheism arises. Yet this monotheism bears traces of its origin in its substantially anthropomorphic character.

The theory is ingenious, and it has an attractive simplicity. But it is extremely doubtful whether, despite the imposing array of facts which Spencer marshals in its support, it is really borne out by such evidence as is available of the first stages of religious thought among primitive peoples. Our present business, however, is not to discuss, but merely to outline it. Starting with this interpretation of the genesis of religious ideas, Spencer proceeds to show that the whole tendency of thought during the higher stages of culture and civilisation is towards what Fiske called deanthropomorphisation. This is due in part to moral and in part to intellectual development. When monotheism has

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been reached, the conception of the one supreme God is gradually purged of manlike attributes. The grosser attributes—the more glaring moral imperfections—are, of course, the first to disappear. In the moral progress of the race men cannot continue to ascribe to Deity qualities which have become odious in humanity. This moralisation of the idea of God is largely dependent upon the gradual transition of society from a condition of chronic warfare to one of well-established peace. ‘Ascribed characters of deities are continually adapted and readapted to the needs of the social state. During the militant phase of activity the chief god is conceived as holding insubordination as the greatest crime, as implacable in anger, as merciless in punishment; and any alleged attributes of milder kinds occupy but small space in the social consciousness. But when militancy declines and the harsh despotic form of government appropriate to it is gradually qualified by the form appropriate to industrialism, the foreground of the religious consciousness is increasingly filled with those ascribed traits of the divine nature which are congruous with the ethics of peace; divine love, divine mercy, divine forgiveness are now the characteristics enlarged upon.’ Yet intellectual progress entails the elimination of even

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these higher attributes, since it necessarily forces upon men a more and more distinct realisation of the impossibility of thinking of the Power everywhere revealed in the universe in any terms derived from human thought and feeling. Hereafter, then, men will gradually drop 'the higher anthropomorphic characters from the First Cause, as they have long since dropped the lower.' What will be the result? 'The conception which has been enlarging from the beginning must go on enlarging, until, by disappearance of its limits, it becomes a consciousness which transcends the forms of thought, though it for ever remains a consciousness.'

Spencer thus traces the growth of religious ideas from that crudest anthropomorphism, in which they are alleged to have originated, to that final stage where all definite conceptions vanish and nothing is left beyond an indefinite though inexpugnable sense of Creative Power — 'an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed.' But here we are confronted by a difficulty. If this account of the transformation of religious ideas be accepted, have we not also to accept the conclusion which seems to be involved in it — that philosophical agnosticism, which expresses our right attitude towards the

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mystery of the universe, is only the last term in the development of thought out of a conception which was utterly untrue? We begin with the savage's baseless belief in the material double of his dead ancestor. Out of this, by the process of gradual expansion and dematerialisation, arises the general idea of supernatural agencies. By the continuation of the same process, some of the original human attributes being dropped while others are transfigured, the conception of Deity is attained. Then, deanthropomorphisation being carried to its utmost limits, the ultimate form of religious consciousness is reached. The objection, then, may clearly be urged that if this ultimate form of religious consciousness is to be interpreted as emerging out of primitive superstition, it, too, must be condemned as merely a refinement of superstition. 'Surely if the primitive belief was absolutely false, all derived beliefs must be absolutely false.'

Admitting that the objection looks fatal, Spencer replies that it is not really so because its premiss is not valid. The primitive belief was not absolutely false. It contained an element of truth—'the truth, namely, that the Power which manifests itself in consciousness is but a differently-conditioned form of the Power which mani-



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feels itself beyond consciousness.' In every voluntary act the primitive man recognises 'a source of energy within him.' He inevitably ascribes all changes in the world about him to the same kind of energy. At first he conceives this energy as exercised in precisely the same way as his own—'as put forth by beings like himself.' With the development of thought the purely human connotations and associations gradually fall away, and the idea of objective force is more and more differentiated from the idea of force as known in consciousness. Yet even the man of science, in whom this differentiation is most complete, 'is compelled to symbolise objective force in terms of subjective force from lack of any other symbol.' The implications are important. 'That internal energy which in the experiences of the primitive man was always the immediate antecedent of the changes wrought by him—that energy which, when interpreting external changes, he thought of along with those attributes of a human personality connected with it in himself; is the same energy which, freed from anthropomorphic accompaniments, is now figured as the cause of all external phenomena. The last stage reached is recognition of the truth that force as it exists beyond consciousness, cannot be like



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what we know as force within consciousness; and that yet, as either is capable of generating the other, they must be different modes of the same. Consequently, the final outcome of that speculation commenced by the primitive man, is that the Power manifested throughout the universe distinguished as material, is the same Power which in ourselves wells up under the form of consciousness.' Thus 'the final form of religious consciousness' is the ultimate product, not of a belief which was wholly false, but 'of a consciousness which at the outset contained a germ of truth obscured by multitudinous errors.' In the continued development of thought the errors have been slowly eliminated and the underlying truth disengaged.

From this point we advance naturally to Spencer's heroic attempt to reconcile religion and science. We have already seen that the ultimate truth of science is the persistence of force, and that by persistence of force we really mean 'the persistence of some Cause which transcends our knowledge and conception.' We now learn that the ultimate truth of religion is the existence of such an inscrutable Power. Science finds incomprehensible energy behind all the phenomena which it investigates. This consciousness of an

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incomprehensible energy, 'called Omnipresent from inability to assign its limits,' is 'just that consciousness in which religion dwells.' Science everywhere leads to the mystery in which religion begins. The Persistent Force of the one is the Eternal God of the other. 'Here, then, is a truth in which religions in general agree with one another, and with a philosophy antagonistic to their special dogmas. If Religion and Science are to be reconciled, the basis of reconciliation must be this deepest, widest, and most certain of all facts—that the Power which the universe manifests to us is inscrutable.'

To the vast majority of men it will certainly appear that this reconciliation is effected only by the sacrifice of everything they are accustomed to consider as specifically and positively religious. They will, moreover, regret that Spencer did not push his argument, as he might naturally have done, beyond the purely negative position in which he rests. As it is, religious thought and sentiment are reduced by him, as Sidgwick put it, 'to a perfectly indefinite consciousness of the Unknowable, and the emotion that accompanies this peculiar intellectual exercise.' That he was himself fully satisfied with this conclusion, and was rarely troubled by any sense of our common

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human need for religious hope and consolation, is probably to be explained by reference less to his philosophy than to his temperament. He was well aware that 'in the genesis of a system of thought the emotional nature is a large factor; perhaps as large a factor as the intellectual nature.' Because his own nature was deficient on the emotional side, he was able to accept the agnosticism to which, as it seemed to him, his reasoning committed him, without any recoil of feeling against the unbroken darkness in which it left the universe enshrouded. He realised indeed that 'an immense majority' will resent, 'with more or less of indignation,' his proposed substitution of 'an unthinkable abstraction' for 'a Being towards whom we may entertain definite feelings.' He further admitted, not only that current religious conceptions 'are indispensable as transitional modes of thought,' but also that in all probability 'under their most abstract forms, ideas of this order will always continue to occupy the background of consciousness. Very likely there will ever remain a need to give shape to that indefinite sense of an Ultimate Existence, which forms the basis of our intelligence. We shall always be under the necessity of contemplating it as *some* mode of being; that is—of representing it to our-

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selves in *some* form of thought, however vague. And we shall not err in doing this so long as we treat every notion we thus frame as merely a symbol.' Science rolls back the problem of the universe, but it does not solve it. A sphere of consciousness will thus always remain which 'rational interpretation' will never serve to occupy; and as this sphere 'can never become an unfilled sphere'—as men will never outgrow their sense of the final mystery of things and their desire to penetrate it—religion can never be destroyed. Yet the religious progress of the race hereafter, as Spencer forecasts it, can be scarcely more than a series of futile endeavours after transcendental truth, in which the mind of man, repeatedly baffled, will again and again be driven to take refuge in agnosticism. 'By continually seeking to know and being continually thrown back into a deepened conviction of the impossibility of knowing, we may keep alive our consciousness that it is alike our highest wisdom and our highest duty to regard that through which all things exist as Unknowable.'

## CHIEF DATES AND AUTHORITIES

### CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1820. Herbert Spencer born, April 27.  
1837. Begins work as Civil Engineer.  
1842. Publication of *Letters on the Proper Sphere of Government*.  
1848. Becomes sub-editor of *The Economist*.  
1850. Publication of *Social Statics*.  
1850. The *System of Synthetic Philosophy* projected.  
1860. *First Principles* commenced.  
1862. Publication of *First Principles*.  
1882. Visit to America.  
1896. Completion of the *Synthetic Philosophy*.  
1898. Settles at 5 Percival Terrace, Brighton.  
1903. Death, December 8.

### BRIEF LIST OF ENGLISH BOOKS DEALING WITH SPENCER'S PHILOSOPHY

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1901. A digest of the system, published with Spencer's authority.  
DUNCAN, D., *The Life and Letters of Herbert Spencer*. 1908.  
The authoritative biography written at Spencer's request. It contains (pp. 533-576) a most important essay on 'The Filiation of Ideas,' left by Spencer for publication in this volume. This gives the history of his theories and a 'sketch plan' of his philosophy.

## CHIEF DATES AND AUTHORITIES

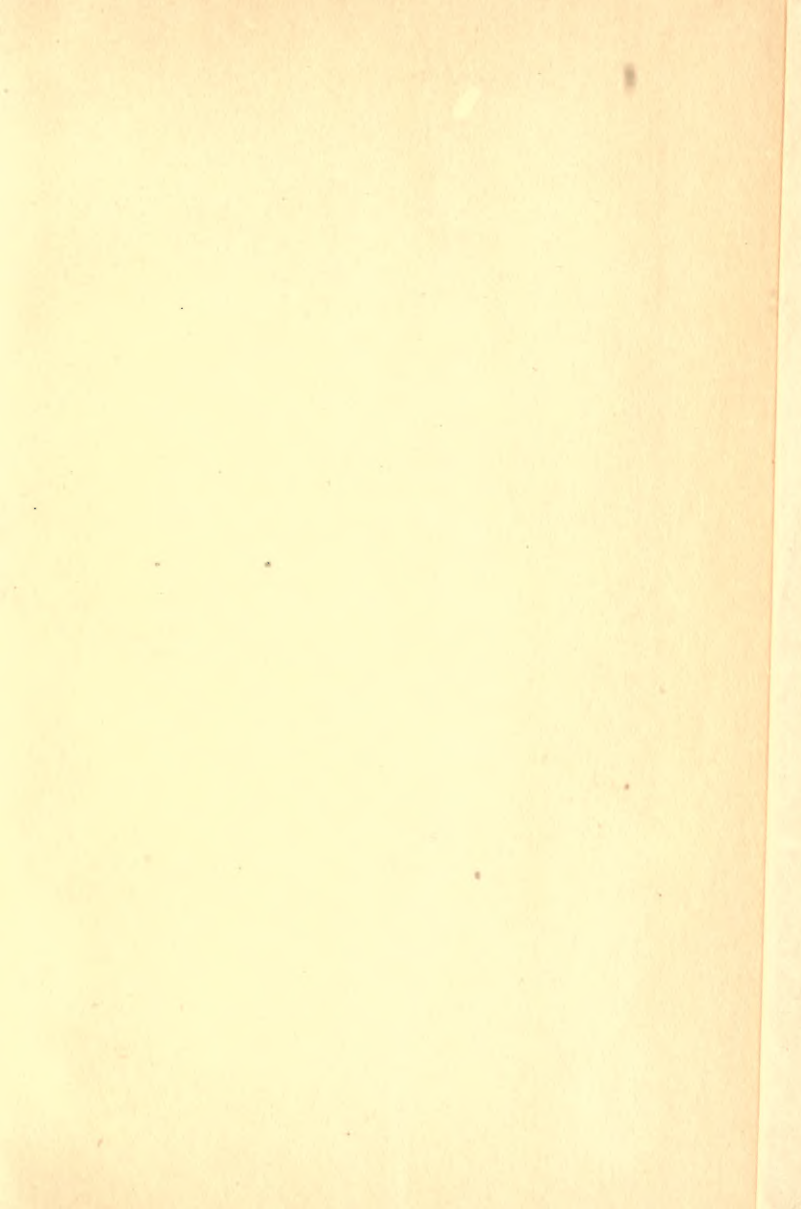
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